MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Lansing

December 7, 1955

Dr. William R. Collings, President
Dow Corning Company
Midland, Michigan

Dear Dr. Collings:

The first draft of the preliminary report of the Objectives Committee arrived last Monday. I have been studying it with a great deal of interest for I realize that this report is the result of a great deal of labor on the part of your Committee (perhaps I should say all three Committees).

I have been aware, for some time, of the possibility that the Committee might recommend the study of a four-year degree granting institution. My first awareness of this occurred at the meeting of the Executive Committee at the Tri-City Airport on September 8, 1955, when I presented, "A Proposed Plan of Procedure." The Committee asked me to strike out all references to a "community college" so the door could be left open for something "bigger." Since then I have heard rumors to the effect that one county in particular would settle for nothing less than a four-year degree granting institution. I have been hoping that the idea would not become the basis of the Study itself.

When I was asked to participate actively in the Tri-County College Study as coordinator, members of the Executive Committee justified my close involvement to Dr. Taylor on the premise that a demonstrated pattern for local study concerning community college establishment was needed for the State of Michigan. For, in the words of Dr. Clair Taylor when he approved the request for my involvement, "We want to do all that we can to help develop a worthy example and a desirable precedent for all areas in Michigan where the citizens desire to establish a community college."

A change in the concept of community college to mean one which offers four years of collegiate level training constitutes a change in the "ground rules" of the Study as far as my participation is concerned. The change reduces the value of the study as a demonstration for other potential community college areas and places the Department of Public Instruction, through my participation, in a position of giving tacit approval to the proposal.

I have taken the liberty of discussing the first draft of the Objective Committee report with several responsible colleagues in the Department of Public Instruction. My colleagues are unanimously agreed that the first listed principle and several subsequent principles stemming from it should be reconsidered by the Objectives Committee. The first principle reads in part, " ... the basis of the proposed college for this Northeast regional area of Michigan should be a full four-year first quality liberal arts course."

We have two reasons for suggesting a reconsideration of this principle.

First, the State Legislature has, up to this date, refrained from granting the legal right to local districts, excepting in the case of the City of Detroit, to provide more than two years of collegiate level work leading toward a degree. The Legislature may change its mind about the matter, but it probably will wish to have the issue answered by its Joint Interim Committee to which it has appropriated a considerable sum of money to conduct a state-wide study of higher education in Michigan. This Joint Committee, which undoubtedly will require a year or two to develop a final report, will attempt to define for some time to come the appropriate roles of state, private, and locally controlled institutions of higher learning. We believe that a proposal made previous to the Joint Committee's report to allow an extension of the role of locally controlled institutions to include four years of collegiate level training would be premature and would tend to jeopardize the objectivity of the Committee's state-wide study.

Second, it appears most impractical, in spite of the merits of the published statement, "Let's Think Big," to plan and establish at the outset an institution as complex and expensive as one providing a full four-year program. A new institution, serving and controlled by three counties, is a frontier venture in itself--a venture so forward looking that it would have received no consideration five years ago. And the planning and establishment of such new institutions to provide two years of collegiate level training would not eliminate the possibility of expanding the facilities and program to include four years of collegiate level work at some later date in accordance with a possible decision by the Legislature.

The issue concerning the amount of collegiate level work to be offered must be settled now if the Study is to progress in an orderly manner to some conclusion.

I am, therefore, strongly suggesting, for the previously stated reasons, that the Tri-County College Study be confined to the question of jointly establishing an institution which would provide at the outset, among other offerings, not more than two years of collegiate level work.

Sincerely yours,

Ferris N. Crawford, Chief
Higher Education and Certification

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cc: Executive Committee members